

Escondida Achieves Highest Copper Production in 10 Years

RESULTS. It registered 644,000 tons during the second half of 2024.

MERCURIO DE ANTOFAGASTA

BHP has released the results obtained during the first half of its fiscal year 2025 (second half of 2024), a period in which Minera Escondida reached a copper production record, driving it to its best results in the last 10 years. According to the production report, the mine produced 644,000 tons of copper, 22% more than in the same period last year. In this regard, the president of Escondida, Alejandro Tapia, commented, "Our mid-year results confirm our positive trend in safety and production. We have achieved records in various operational areas and reversed trends thanks to our team's focus. We aim to complete fiscal year 2025 with the same trend and continue advancing in our Growth Plan projects."

The company also stated in the report that the results were mainly due to a higher feed grade at the concentrator of 1.03% (compared to 0.81% in the same period of fiscal year 2024) and higher recoveries as mining advanced to areas with higher-grade ore as planned.

Additionally, this was offset by a lower planned cathode production as the integration of the Full SaL project continued, which will begin its first production in the upcoming months of this semester.

PAMPA NORTE

Pampa Norte, which consists of Spence and Cerro Colorado (temporarily closed), registered a 9% decrease, with 126,000 tons of copper, contributing 11,000 tons in the first half of fiscal year 2025. Spence's production decreased by 1% in line with the lower cathode production. The concentrator's feed grade was in line with the previous period, and recoveries continue to improve. The production estimate for this semester is between 240,000 and 270,000 tons.

The copper production of Minera Escondida increased by 22% during the second half of 2024.

Teck Increases Copper Production by 50%, Driven by Quebrada Blanca

PULSO

The implementation of Phase 2 of Quebrada Blanca drove Canadian mining company Teck's total copper production to 446,000 tons, a 50.4% increase compared to 296,500 tons in 2023. According to the company's annual report, this was "mainly due to the ramp-up of Quebrada Blanca, which reached its design production rates by the end of the year."

This growth stems from the expanded production at Quebrada Blanca Phase 2 (QB2), which began operations in October 2023. Teck holds a 60% stake in the project, Sumitomo owns 30%, and the remaining 10% was acquired by Codelco from Enami in a \$520 million transaction completed in December.

As a result, the mine's production rose from 62,800 tons to 207,800 tons of copper year-over-year. Quebrada Blanca accounted for 97% of the company's total production increase.

In addition to other investment projects in Chile and abroad, Teck told Pulso, "Our focus on QB is to advance optimization and remove bottlenecks to increase production capacity. This will require submitting an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which is expected in the second half of 2025."

Antofagasta Minerals Submits Key Project to Characterize Resources at Cachorro Deposit

■ The goal is to generate the necessary inputs for the subsequent design of copper deposit exploitation.

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Antofagasta Minerals (AMSA), the mining arm of the Luksic group, has submitted a project to the Environmental Impact Assessment Service (SEIA) for advanced surface and underground mining prospecting at the potential copper deposit "Cachorro," involving an investment of \$220 million.

The initiative, titled "Mining Prospecting for the Characterization of the Cachorro Mineral Deposit," is located in the municipality of Sierra Gorda, Antofagasta Region. Its aim is to obtain material samples from the deposit's resources and assess its reserves through drilling.

According to the Environmental Impact Declaration (DIA) submitted by the company, the project entails drilling up to 732 vertical and inclined boreholes from surface platforms (183 in total). Underground prospecting will take place at 24 drilling stations as part of a program to drill at least 100,000 meters in length.

Additionally, the project includes the construction of access roads and the expansion of the Lenka camp to accommodate workers involved in the project's development. It also plans to build a worksite facility to support both surface and underground activities. The initiative, with a projected lifespan of seven years, will require a workforce of 171 employees during the construction phase and 250 during operations.

Cachorro is wholly owned by Antofagasta Minerals and is located between Antucoya and Centinela, both operated by the company. In 2017, AMSA received approval for the "Cachorro Project Mining Prospecting" initiative, which involved an investment of \$30 million and enabled the identification of the deposit's geological potential. The findings included mantle-type sulfides, primarily chalcopyrite and bornite, along with some oxides.

Unionization Rate Reaches Nearly 20% and Increases Valuation of Collective Bargaining

■ This was confirmed by the latest edition of the Encla survey, which also showed high trust in union leadership among employers.

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BY CAROLINA LEÓN

New data regarding labor conditions within companies were released by the Labor Directorate (DT) and the National Statistics Institute (INE).

Yesterday, both entities unveiled the results of the tenth version of the Labor Survey (Encla 2023), a key measurement for the labor world as it provides an overview of labor relations, employment conditions, and gender equality in companies across the country.

The survey, which covered a sample of 4,496 companies nationwide, representing nearly five million workers, showed that the union membership rate reached 19.9% in 2023, totaling 977,649 people affiliated with unions. Of this group, 38.7% are women (378,486), and 61.3% are men (599,164).

The union membership rate is consistent with the official statistical data from the DT, which estimated the membership rate at 19.3% by the end of December 2022.

As the size of the company increases, union membership also rises. In micro and small enterprises, only 1.7% of employees are unionized, while in medium-sized companies, the rate rises to 10.1%, and in large companies, it reaches 35%.

Large companies account for 86.8% of unionized workers, while medium-sized businesses account for 10.6%, and small and micro-enterprises account for 2.6% of total union membership.

This pattern, the Encla explains, suggests that it is more likely to be unionized in large companies, and much less likely in medium, small, and micro-enterprises, where the smaller number of employees makes it more difficult to meet the minimum conditions for forming a union, or where the state of labor relations makes it challenging to succeed in such efforts.

Furthermore, in 28% of companies with unions, these unions represent the entire workforce.

Sectorial Situation

Mining is the economic sector with the highest proportion of unionized employees, with 83.7% of directly hired workers being unionized. It is followed by gas and water supply (63.3%) and artistic activities (63%).

Nevertheless, according to the Encla, only 3.9% of companies have at least one active union, while 96.1% do not have unions. "More specifically, it can be estimated that out of a total of 129,231 companies, 5,025 have unions, while 124,206 do not have such organizations," the survey adds.

Valuation of Union Activity

The survey also asked employers about the level of trust they have in union leaders, and generally, it appears that there is a good level of trust, as 79.6% of employers expressed having a high or very high level of trust in their union leaders.

On the other hand, regarding the trust of union leaders in company management, it was observed that in 45% of companies with unions, there is a high level of trust. "It is important to note that in almost a third of large companies (with unions), there is low trust in their executives, such as owners, managers, or senior executives," the survey added.

Agreements

The survey showed that only 3.5% of companies with five or more employees had any active collective agreement or group negotiating instrument at the time of being surveyed.

Although the number of companies with a collective agreement is low, the Encla revealed that both workers and employers have a predominantly positive perception of the benefits of collective bargaining processes at their workplaces.

In companies where collective bargaining has taken place, 80.7% of employers and 90.7% of workers consider these processes to have been beneficial or very beneficial. In companies where collective bargaining has not occurred, the positive valuation drops to 51.4% for employers and 54.2% for workers.

"We are pleased with the valuation of union freedom. We see that companies value having unions, that where there is a union, there is collective bargaining, and that, in general, there is also a good valuation of the results of collective bargaining, both from employers and workers," said the Director of the Labor Directorate, Pablo Zenteno.

Investment Portfolio of InvestChile Closed 2024 with Record Figures, Highlighting the Energy Sector's Performance

Additionally, the United States was the leading country of origin for investing companies, as explained by InvestChile.

PULSO

The portfolio of foreign investment projects supported by InvestChile in 2024 reached US\$ 56.234 billion, the highest figure since the agency's creation, according to the agency's statement.

InvestChile detailed that the record amount, which represents a 68% increase compared to 2023, is associated with 474 projects from foreign companies at different stages of development and the creation of over 21,000 potential direct jobs.

"Of the total figure, US\$ 14.460 billion corresponds to materialized investment (initiatives that are already installed and in the development phase in the country). The 113 projects in this stage generated 4,605 formal and quality jobs," explained InvestChile in a statement.

Other data revealed that 88% of InvestChile's portfolio (equivalent to US\$ 49.468 billion) corresponds to projects located outside the Metropolitan Region.

Regarding the amount, the Director of the Foreign Investment Promotion Agency, Karla Flores, pointed to the green hydrogen industry, with investments totaling US\$ 25.617 billion at the close of last year.

"These figures reflect the success of this initiative, and the work of the Agency, as well as the consolidation of our country's leadership in sectors such as mining and technological infrastructure," added Flores.

Meanwhile, the Minister of Economy, Nicolás Grau, highlighted InvestChile's figures: "Chile continues to stand out as an attractive investment hub in Latin America, and together with InvestChile, we are working to bring companies that will help drive economic development throughout the country."

Sector Performance

The energy sector, with US\$ 36.817 billion, led the portfolio of foreign investment projects supported by InvestChile in 2024. Following energy were mining, with US\$ 8.649 billion; and global services, with US\$ 5.400 billion. Both energy and mining saw project amounts grow compared to 2023: 131% and 6%, respectively, according to InvestChile figures.

Other sectors that registered increases in investment amounts included infrastructure, with a 130% rise, reaching US\$ 3.390 billion; and the food industry, which reached US\$ 1.265 billion, recording a 41% increase compared to 2023.

InvestChile also highlighted potential job generation by sector, which by the end of 2024 was led by global services and technology, with 8,325 potential jobs. Mining followed with 5,882 jobs, and energy came in third with 3,304 jobs.

"In all these sectors, potential job generation increased compared to 2023: 3% in the case of global services, 22% for mining, and 157% in energy," added InvestChile.

Main Country of Origin and Austria's Emergence

Regarding the countries of origin of the foreign investment projects in InvestChile's portfolio, companies from the United States concentrated the largest amount, with US\$ 20.510 billion. Austria followed with US\$ 11.052 billion, while Canada ranked third with US\$ 6.275 billion.

In the case of these three countries, the 2024 amount is higher than the previous year: while the United States saw a 107% increase and Canada a 18% rise, Austria appeared for the first time among the leading countries of investment origin.

Regarding Austria, InvestChile explained that in 2023, the European economy only had US\$ 52 million in the agency's portfolio, a situation that changed last year with the inclusion of the HNH project from Austria Energy and Ökowind companies, totaling US\$ 11 billion, where Danish company Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners is also a partner.

Another notable case highlighted by InvestChile was that, for the first time, InvestChile's portfolio includes projects from Saudi Arabia, with a potential investment of US\$ 1.400 billion.

Permitting: Bill Advances in Senate After General Approval

In a double session, 32 articles of the initiative were approved as they received no amendments. Additionally, three articles related to the SUPER platform were approved. The bulk of the bill still depends on over 300 amendments proposed by senators and parliamentarians, which will be voted on this Wednesday.

PULSO

By Víctor Guillou

The government achieved further progress with the bill establishing the Framework Law on Sectoral Authorizations. On Tuesday, the Senate's Economic Commission approved the bill in general, thereby endorsing a total of 32 articles that were not subject to amendments. This maintained the provisions previously approved by the Chamber of Deputies for approximately one-third of the bill's articles.

In addition, three articles related to the SUPER platform (Unified Permit System) were approved. Specifically, it was agreed that service chiefs will be responsible for ensuring compliance with legal obligations concerning system interoperability and issuing alerts when deadlines for resolving sectoral authorizations approach.

A group of amendments to the bill's initial articles was also voted on, including the addition of cost-effectiveness as a criterion limiting regulations.

However, the bulk of the bill still hinges on the fate of over 300 amendments proposed by senators and parliamentarians, which will be voted on this Wednesday after the Executive renewed the immediate discussion urgency for the bill.

The initiative's progress is being closely monitored by some industry groups, particularly after the Executive agreed with parliamentarians on aspects such as allowing project holders to request all permits associated with an investment project simultaneously. This measure could significantly reduce processing times.

George Lever, research manager of the Santiago Chamber of Commerce (CCS), stated, "In general, we have a very positive view of the bill. Its approval and implementation seem essential to address issues caused by the excessive complexity and delays in processes required for obtaining indispensable permits for investment and economic activity."

Lever emphasized the importance of parallel permit processing, stating, "We see it as fully aligned with the bill's objectives." However, he added, "Going forward, we hope that exceptions to the new standards will be minimal and constitute extraordinary, well-justified cases."

Meanwhile, the Chamber of Deputies approved the bill strengthening oversight by the Environmental Superintendency (SMA), thereby completing its first legislative stage. The bill will now be reviewed by the Senate. This initiative, introduced by the Ministry of the Environment, aims to enhance the institutional framework of the SMA to strengthen oversight and promote environmental compliance.

"This is a very important step in this reform. Making the SMA more efficient, strengthening its oversight role, and promoting environmental compliance will allow us, as a country, to better protect our natural heritage and safeguard the quality of life for people while providing certainty to the private sector," said Deputy Minister of the Environment Maximiliano Proaño.

Government Introduces Tailings Agenda Focused on Monitoring and Reprocessing

■ Minister Aurora Williams highlighted the “high potential” to find cobalt and rare earth elements in this type of mining waste.

Diario Financiero, January 22, 2025

By Patricia Marchetti

The Ministry of Mining presented the 2025/2026 Tailings Agenda on Tuesday, aimed at improving the management of mining waste, monitoring it, and potentially relocating or reprocessing it to extract other strategic minerals such as cobalt and rare earth elements.

“We are the third country with the most mining deposits and a tailings mass exceeding 28 billion tons. This figure demands that we address issues like risk monitoring, remediation, and reprocessing of mining waste,” said Minister Aurora Williams.

According to Sernageomin, Chile has nearly 800 tailings in nine regions, most of them located between Atacama and Coquimbo. Of this total, 176 are abandoned with unknown ownership, 128 are active, 475 inactive, and 15 are under construction.

The agenda includes three work streams and seven concrete actions as part of a public-private collaboration effort to improve the long-term management of tailings.

Key actions include a modification and “thorough review” of Supreme Decree No. 24, which regulates the design, construction, and operation of tailings; the development of a digital platform to visualize the country’s deposits; the identification of their owners; and the creation of a relocation and remediation program.

Regarding tailings reprocessing, the minister noted the “high potential” to find cobalt and rare earth elements in them. To support this, Corfo launched a call in December to fund R&D projects with up to \$4 million aimed at developing technologies for recovering these minerals.

On abandoned tailings, Williams stated, “We will identify owners depending on the criticality of the deposits, based on their volume, location, and potential impacts in the event of a climate-related incident.” She emphasized that the primary concerns are their physical and geochemical stability.

During her presentation at the Advanced Mining Technology Center (AMTC) of the University of Chile, the Mining Minister said, “The National Lithium Strategy, the Mining Climate Change Sectoral Plan, the Critical Minerals Strategy, and this agenda are evidence of our commitment to addressing the critical challenges of the industry and advancing its progress to adapt its development to the dynamic demands of positioning Chilean mining as a global benchmark for addressing and mitigating local impacts.”

Doubles Investment in 2024:

US Leads Record Rise in Foreign Investment Projects

InvestChile's project portfolio reached US\$ 56.234 billion.

MERCURIO DE SANTIAGO
GABRIELA GEISSE

The United States became the leading country of origin for foreign investment in Chile during 2024, accumulating US\$ 20.510 billion in projects supported by InvestChile, according to the agency's latest report. This amount represents a 107% increase compared to the previous year.

Austria ranked second, with US\$ 11.052 billion, due to its significant entry into the portfolio with the HNH project led by Austria Energy, Ökowind, and Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners, focused on green hydrogen production. Canada completed the top three with an investment of US\$ 6.275 billion, reflecting an 18% increase from 2023.

One of the surprises of the report was the appearance of Saudi Arabia, which ranked seventh among the top ten investors, with initiatives totaling US\$ 1.400 billion.

Beyond the countries, the report highlights that InvestChile's total portfolio closed 2024 with a record figure of US\$ 56.234 billion, the highest since the agency's creation in 2016. This amount represents a 68% increase compared to 2023.

Within this set of projects, the energy sector led investor interest, accumulating US\$ 36.817 billion. It was followed by mining with US\$ 8.649 billion and the global services and technology sector with US\$ 5.400 billion. Additionally, sectors such as infrastructure and the food industry also experienced significant growth, with increases of 130% and 41%, respectively.